

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----078444 131938Z /53

O 131620Z SEP 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5183  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4519

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: MOPS MILI PBOR IS LE  
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: (A) TEL AVIV 6846, (B) STATE 218559, (C) BEIRUT 4496

1. WE TOO ARE DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED BY ISRAELI RESPONSE REPORTED REF A. BOUTROS HAS NOT CALLED TODAY (SEP 13) AND I HAVE NOT CONSULTED HIM SINCE TO DO SO WOULD REQUIRE A PERSONAL MEETING THAT WOULD BE CERTAIN TO ATTRACT PRESS ATTENTION AND MIGHT LEAD TO UNHELPFUL LEAKS AND/OR PRESS SPECULATION (WITNESS PRESS REACTION TO MY MEETING WITH BOUTROS SEP 12). HOWEVER, WE ARE CONVINCED THAT IF THE ISRAELIS REFUSE TO MODIFY THEIR HARDLINE POSITION, ALL CHANCES FOR AN EARLY PEACE IN SOUTH LEBANON WILL DISAPPEAR AND THE SITUATION IS VERY LIKELY TO GET WORSE.

2. FOLLOWING ARE OUR RESPONSES TO DEPARTMENT'S SPECIFIC QUESTIONS IN REF B:

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A. WE DO NOT REPEAT NOT BELIEVE A MORE EXTENSIVE PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL IS NEGOTIABLE UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. AS WE HAVE POINTED OUT IN PREVIOUS MESSAGES, LIMITED PALESTINIAN PRESENCE SOUTH OF THE LITANI AND IN THE ARQUB IS SANCTIONED BY CAIRO/MELKHART AGREEMENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED BY ALL THE ARAB COUNTRIES AND HAVE BEEN THE BASIS FOR THE PALESTINIAN

PRESENCE IN LEBANON. THE MORE RECENT SHTAURA AGREEMENT, AS IT PERTAINS TO SOUTH LEBANON, IS SIMPLY AN OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE ACCORDS. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL AND PRESIDENT SARKIS IN PARTICULAR ARE FULLY COMMITTED TO THEM. DESPITE ADF COMMANDER KHATIB'S STATEMENT TO OUR POLOFF THAT EXACT LOCATION OF PALESTINIAN POSTS WAS OF NO CONCERN TO PLO AT THIS TIME (PARA 6, BEIRUT 4350), IT HAS NEVER BEEN CONTEMPLATED THAT THESE POSTS WOULD BE NORTH AND WEST OF THE LITANI. THE PLO LEADERSHIP WAS INITIALLY ABLE TO CONVINCE ITS MEMBERS TO WITHDRAW TO THESE POSTS SINCE IT WAS SO SPECIFIED IN THE CAIRO ACCORDS. THEY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PERSUADE THEM TO GO FURTHER; I.E., NORTH AND WEST OF THE LITANI. IT SHOULD BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT ADF COMMANDER KHATIB TOLD OUR POLOFF THAT PALESTINIANS WILL FURTHER REDUCE THEIR EFFECTIVE STRENGTH IN SOUTH LEBANON WHEN IT BECOMES POLITICALLY POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO DO SO.

B. AS WE SEE IT, THE PLO LEADERSHIP AGREED IN LATE JULY TO THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT PRIMARILY FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

(1) THEY RECOGNIZED THAT THEIR FORCES NO LONGER POSED A CREDIBLE MILITARY THREAT TO ISRAEL AND THAT THEIR CONTINUED PRESENCE IN SOUTH LEBANON CONSTANTLY EXPOSED THEM TO THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ISRAELI ATTACK  
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WHICH COULD DESTROY BOTH THEIR FORCES AND THEIR MILITARY CREDIBILITY;

(2) THE PLO LEADERSHIP WISHED TO ESTABLISH AN IMAGE OF MODERATION AND RESPONSIBILITY IN PREPARATION FOR A PERIOD OF DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY, ESPECIALLY THE VANCE VISIT AND THE FORTHCOMING UNGA SESSION;

(3) THE PLO DESIRED TO IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH LEBANESE MOSLEMS WHO WERE CRITICAL OF PALESTINIAN ACTIVITY IN THE SOUTH;

(4) THE PLO WAS UNDER SYRIAN PRESSURE IN JULY TO TAKE THIS LINE. IT TOOK AN UNUSUAL COMBINATION OF CIRCUMSTANCES TO GET THE PLO LEADERSHIP TO GO THIS FAR IN JULY AND THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY THEY WILL GO ANY FURTHER NOW. IN RECENT WEEKS, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE HAVE BEEN INCREASING REPORTS THAT THE PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS, WHO INITIALLY CONCURRED IN THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT, ARE HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS. FURTHERMORE, Wafa on Sep 12 quotes Arafat as saying in a speech in Baalbek, in reference to Gur and Weizman's call for the PLO forces to pull back north of the Litani, "I CANNOT

WITHDRAW THE JOINT FORCES TO THE NORTH OF THE LITANI FOR THE ONLY ORDER I GIVE IS THAT OF FIGHTING." DESPITE THIS BELLICOSE LANGUAGE, WE BELIEVE THE PLO INSISTENCE ON MAINTAINING A PRESENCE SOUTH OF THE LITANI IS FOR POLITICAL, NOT MILITARY REASONS. ADF COMMANDER KHATIB'S REMARKS SUPPORT THIS VIEW. IF THE PALESTINIANS REALLY WERE PREPARED TO ATTACK ISRAEL, AN ADDITIONAL 10 KILOMETERS AND A FEW LEBANESE ARMY TROOPS WOULD NOT STOP THEM. BUT THEY CANNOT AGREE TO ABANDON ALL THEIR RIGHTS UNDER THE CAIRO AGREEMENT, PARTICULARLY UNDER AN ISRAELI THREAT, WITHOUT COMPLETELY LOSING THEIR CREDIBILITY WITH PALESTINIAN RANK AND FILE. IF SARKIS WERE TO ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE THEM TO DO SO, HE WOULD LOSE ALL CREDIBILITY AS A JUST AND FAIR ARBITER.

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C. AS SEEN FROM BEIRUT, THE SYRIANS APPEAR UNWILLING TO PRESS FOR A MORE EXTENSIVE PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL AT THIS TIME. IN FACT, RECENT REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE SYRIAN POSITION HAS HARDENED SINCE THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT WAS NEGOTIATED IN LATE JULY AND THEY ARE NOW TAKING A MORE REJECTIONIST LINE. THE SYRIANS WOULD FIND IT JUST AS HARD AS THE PLO LEADERSHIP TO APPEAR TO BE KNUCKLING UNDER TO AN ISRAELI THREAT. WHETHER OR NOT THE SYRIANS WOULD BE WILLING AT A LATER DATE TO HELP THE LEBANESE NEGOTIATE A MORE EXTENSIVE PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL WILL UNDOUBTEDLY DEPEND ON NON-LEBANESE FACTORS SUCH AS THE EVOLUTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS AND THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN SYRIA.

D. THE LEBANESE THEMSELVES MIGHT WELL BE WILLING TO TRY TO NEGOTIATE A MORE EXTENSIVE PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL AFTER THE INITIAL CEASE-FIRE AND PULL BACK UNDER THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT, BUT THIS WILL BE A SLOW AND DIFFICULT PROCESS. THE KEY IS FINDING SOME PLACE ELSE FOR THE PALESTINIANS TO GO, OUTSIDE OF LEBANON. WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN EMBASSY DAMASCUS' ASSESSMENT OF HOW MANY SYRIA WILL TAKE.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W

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O 131620Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5184

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 4519

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y F O R T E X T

E. WE BELIEVE THAT DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN GENERAL KHOURY AND THE ISRAELIS UNDER AN ILMAC UMBRELLA, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT, MAY WELL OFFER A PROMISING AVENUE TO SECURE LEBANESE-ISRAELI COOPERATION. RECENT REPORTS HAVE INDICATED THAT GENERAL KHOURY AND HIS STAFF FEEL IT IS ESSENTIAL TO WORK WITH THE ISRAELIS TO COORDINATE LEBANESE ARMY MOVEMENTS INTO SOUTH LEBANON. ALTHOUGH BOUTROS WAS MUCH MORE CAUTIOUS ON THIS SUBJECT IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH ME ON SEP 12, WE BELIEVE HE AND SARKIS MIGHT BE PERSUADED TO SANCTION SUCH CONTACTS BETWEEN MILITARY OFFICERS PROVIDED THAT, AND THIS IS AN IMPORTANT PROVISIO, THE ISRAELIS DO NOT EMBARRASS GOL BY PUBLICIZING THESE CONTACTS. WE DOUBT THAT BOUTROS WOULD BE INTERESTED IN ACTUALLY NEGOTIATING THE CEASE-FIRE ARRANGEMENTS IN THE ILMAC CHANNEL.

F. ALTHOUGH BOUTROS HAS BEEN VAGUE ON THE EXACT

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SCENARIO TO BE FOLLOWED ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SHTAURA III IN SOUTH LEBANON, WE BELIEVE HE HAS THE FOLLOWING TIMING IN MIND: ONCE THE NECESSARY ISRAELI ASSURANCES HAVE BEEN RECEIVED, PRESIDENT SARKIS WOULD ANNOUNCE THE DATE ON WHICH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT IS TO BEGIN AND THE PALESTINIANS WOULD IMMEDIATELY ANNOUNCE A CEASE-FIRE. THE PALESTINIANS WOULD BEGIN MOVING OUT OF SOUTH LEBANON (EXCEPT FOR THE FIVE SPECIFIED POSTS IN THE MIDDLE SECTOR AND THE THREE IN THE ARQUB) AND WOULD BE REPLACED ON THE SAME DAY BY LEBANESE ARMY FORCES.

WE UNDERSTAND A CAREFUL SCHEDULE HAS BEEN DRAWN UP PROVIDING FOR PALESTINIAN EVACUATION OF THE EASTERN SECTOR WITHIN 14 DAYS, THE MIDDLE SECTOR WITHIN 21 DAYS AND THE WESTERN WITHIN 28 DAYS. LEBANESE ARMY CONTACTS WITH THE ISRAELIS UNDER ILMAC UMBRELLA WOULD TAKE PLACE IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR OCCUPATION OF BORDER AREA. WE DOUBT THAT THE LEBANESE WOULD AGREE TO SUCH CONTACTS UNLESS THEY ARE IN CONTEXT OF PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF BORDER CONTROL.

G. RE ABU IYAD'S CLAIM THAT ALL FEDAYEEN BROUGHT INTO LEBANON SINCE APRIL 1975 HAVE LEFT, WE VERY MUCH DOUBT IT. AS MANY AS 1,000 REJECTIONIST PALESTINIANS REPORTEDLY WENT TO LIBYA TO HELP QADAFI FIGHT EGYPT, BUT THIS IS CERTAINLY NOT ALL THE FEDAYEEN WHO HAVE ENTERED LEBANON SINCE 1975. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT ANY OTHER PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS HAVE LEFT IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS.

3. WE WOULD LIKE TO OFFER FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON AMBASSADOR LEWIS'S DISCUSSION WITH WEIZMAN (REF A):

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A. WE CONCUR WITH AMBASSADOR LEWIS' COMMENT THAT, BASED ON ISRAELI RESPONSE, PRESIDENT SARKIS WILL BE UNABLE TO GET THE PALESTINIANS TO MOVE AT ALL AND THAT ISRAELIS AND CHRISTIANS WILL FACE THE CONTINUATION OF BLOODY CONFLICT WITH SEVERAL THOUSAND PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS AS OPPOSED TO THE STIPULATED 850 MAXIMUM PERMITTED UNDER THE AGREEMENT. AS AMBASSADOR LEWIS HAS PREVIOUSLY POINTED OUT TO ISRAELIS, WE FAIL TO SEE WHAT THEY HAVE TO LOSE IN HOLDING THEIR FIRE, ADOPTING A WAIT-AND-SEE ATTITUDE, AND ALLOWING THE PALESTINIANS TO PEACEFULLY REDUCE THEIR PRESENCE IN SOUTH LEBANON. THE LEBANESE ARE NOT ASKING THAT THE ISRAELIS FORMALLY ACCEPT THE CAIRO AGREEMENT OR CONCUR IN THE PERMANENT PRESENCE OF ARMED PALESTINIANS IN SOUTH LEBANON. ALL THEY ARE ASKING IS THAT THEY BE GIVEN A CHANCE TO REDUCE THE PALESTINIAN ARMED PRESENCE AND REASSERT THEIR AUTHORITY THERE WITHOUT ISRAELI INTERFERENCE.

B. THE CHRISTIANS IN SOUTH LEBANON ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES WHO HAVE DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER THE PALESTINIANS WILL WITHDRAW AS PROMISED. BUT UNDER THE ARRANGEMENTS PROPOSED BY LEBANESE, NOTHING IS LOST BY GIVING THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO IN PEACE. IF PALESTINIANS DO NOT FULFILL THEIR COMMITMENTS, THE GOI CAN RESUME SAME ACTIVITIES IT HAS BEEN ENGAGING IN FOR PAST FEW MONTHS.

C. THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY QUESTION THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY IN ITS PROJECTED POSITIONS AND NUMBERS WOULD BE ABLE TO "CONTROL" ARMED PALESTINIAN ACTIVITY IN SOUTH LEBANON IF THE PALESTINIANS WERE DETERMINED TO CONTINUE FIGHTING. THE LEBANESE ARMY PRESENCE IS LARGELY SYMBOLIC, BUT WITH THE IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL TASK OF OBSERVING PALESTINIAN MOVEMENTS AND REPORTING THEM TO ADF HEADQUARTERS. ADF COMMANDER KHATIB SAYS THAT THE PALESTINIANS NO LONGER HAVE ANY STOMACH FOR A FIGHT WITH THE ISRAELIS AND ARE USING THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT AS A SECRET

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FIGLEAF TO COVER THEIR WITHDRAWAL. IF THIS IS NOT TRUE, AND THE PALESTINIANS DECIDE TO ATTACK ISRAEL, THE LEBANESE ARMY IN ITS PRESENT CONDITION IS NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO STOP THE PALESTINIANS EVEN IF THEY START FROM BEHIND THE LITANI.

4. IF THIS EMBASSY PASSES LATEST ISRAELI PROPOSAL TO THE LEBANESE, EVEN WITHOUT ENDORSING IT, IT WILL BE ASSUMED THAT WE IN FACT SUPPORT IT. GIVEN SITUATION IN BEIRUT TODAY, ISRAELI PROPOSAL AND OUR ASSOCIATION WITH IT ARE LIKELY TO BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE. THIS WILL SEVERELY DAMAGE OUR CREDIBILITY AS AN EVEN-HANDED AND FAIR MEDIATOR NOT ONLY WITH LEBANESE, BUT ALSO WITH MODERATE PALESTINIANS AND PROBABLY WITH THE OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES AND HAVE A DIRECT ADVERSE EFFECT ON OUR EFFORTS TO BRING THE MODERATE PALESTINIANS INTO THE OVERALL MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS.

5. IN RE-READING REF A, IT SEEMS TO US THAT ISRAELIS HAVE NOT COMPLETELY CLOSED THE DOOR ON THE BOUTROS PROPOSAL. IT OBVIOUSLY COSTS THE ISRAELIS NOTHING TO SEE IF THEY CAN GET US TO ACHIEVE THEIR MAXIMUM DANDS FOR THEM. AS FOREGOING MAKES CLEAR, WE THINK THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE. WE RECOMMEND THAT WE GO BACK TO THE ISRAELIS AND STATE WE HAVE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED THEIR REPLY IN THE LIGHT OF THE POSITIONS OF THE OTHER PARTIES AND WE ARE CONVINCED THERE IS NO CHANCE OF TOTAL PLO WITHDRAWAL NORTH AND WEST OF LITANI AT THIS TIME. THE LEBANESE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO ARRANGE THIS, EVEN SHOULD THEY AGREE TO TRY. WE THEREFORE SHOULD REPEAT OUR REQUEST THAT GOI ACQUIESCE IN BOUTROS' PROPOSITION, FOR ALL THE REASONS WE PREVIOUSLY STATED.

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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009